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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

Third World Reaction to Soviet Invasion of Czechoslovakia

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
17 September 1968

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Third World Reaction to Soviet Invasion of Czechoslovakia

Summary

The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia has produced largely predictable reactions among the "third-world" nations of Africa and Asia. A great majority of the governments making official statements have voiced disapproval of the Soviet action, but in varying degrees of severity. In Asia, criticism of the Soviets in nonaligned countries was generally subdued, while in Africa the reaction was almost unanimously hostile. (See Table) There is already some evidence, however, that the unpopularity of the Soviet action will be only temporary, and will have little long-range impact on Soviet relations with the nations of Africa and Asia.

Note: This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence and coordinated with the Office of National Estimates.

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Reaction of Those African and Asian Governments Making Official Statements

APPROVAL	DISAPPROVAL
Iraq	Australia
Mali	Afghanistan
North Korea	Burma
North Vietnam	Burundi
Southern Yemen	Cameroon
Syria	Ceylon
	Congo (K)
	Dahomey
	Ethiopia
	Gabon
	Gambia
	Ghana
	India
	Indonesia
	Israel
	Ivory Coast
	Jordan
	Kenya
	Lesotho
	Libya
	Malagasy Republic
	Malaysia
	Mauritania
	Nepal
	Niger
	Pakistan
	Philippines
	Senegal
	Tanzania
	Thailand
	Togo
	Uganda
	Zambia

Asia

1. Asian governments generally have been restrained in their official reactions to the events in Czechoslovakia. Except for the anticipated condemnations by Australia, the Philippines, and Thailand, no Asian country expressed more than simple disapproval of the Soviet action. The only explicit endorsements of the Soviet intervention came from North Korea and North Vietnam.

2. South Asia's two major powers, India and Pakistan, officially reacted with caution--as evidenced by their abstention from the UN resolution condemning Soviet intervention. India's reliance on substantial Soviet military and economic aid and its consequent unwillingness to jeopardize Indo-Soviet relations diluted the government's censure but did not prevent widespread public condemnation and hostile parliamentary debate. The Pakistani Government, by failing to issue any public statement on the Czech crisis and instructing the press to tone down its criticism of the invaders, demonstrated a firm intention to avoid offending the USSR at a time when Pak-Soviet relations are increasingly warm and Soviet military aid may be forthcoming. The only unequivocal statement in South Asia came from the Government of Ceylon, which labeled the Soviet action "a treacherous stab in the back."

3. In Southeast Asia, Malaysia and Burma merely issued statements voicing adherence to the principles of coexistence and noninterference in the internal affairs of another country. Malaysia's position was presumably influenced by large Soviet purchases of rubber, as well as Moscow's support in the current dispute with the Philippines over Sabah. The Indonesian Government, although expressing shock and criticism in private conversations, tempered its official reaction because of the scheduled arrival of a Soviet economic delegation on 29 August to discuss debt rescheduling and economic assistance.

Africa

4. The African countries were nearly unanimous in their disapproval and condemnation of the Soviet intervention. Such an overwhelmingly unfavorable reaction was made possible by the lack of substantial dependence on the USSR for military and economic assistance. In addition, African capitals are increasingly hostile to any action by a "Great Power" which hints of interference in the internal affairs of another state, a reaction emphasized by the repeated disapproval of the violation of the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of Czechoslovakia.

5. Only the radical state of Mali has officially endorsed the Soviet action, and even here there are indications that the Bamako regime took the action only after strong Soviet pressures had been applied. Although the Guinean regime has maintained a public silence on the event, regime leaders, including President Touré, are evidently disturbed by the Soviet tactics and concerned at the divisions the invasion has created in the socialist camp. Elsewhere in West Africa, numerous official statements accused the Soviets of flagrant violation of the sovereignty of Czechoslovakia and demanded the immediate withdrawal of all Soviet forces from the country. Ghana labeled the Soviet invasion an act of "unjustified aggression and blatant interference," while Gambia suspended its limited cultural relations with the USSR and its Warsaw Pact associates in the Czech venture. Senegal's foreign minister privately characterized the Soviet action as "open aggression" which destroyed the Soviet claim to be a peace-loving nation. Although no public statement was issued in Dakar, Senegal's representative at the UN said his government "regrets and condemns" the intervention.

6. Strong Soviet support for Lagos' efforts to maintain Nigerian unity probably was the most important factor in Nigeria's refusal to comment officially on Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia. The Soviet's backing of federal military forces fighting a civil war with secessionist Ibo tribesmen

has included the sale of jet planes, patrol boats, and other military equipment. Widespread public outcry in Nigeria against the Soviet intervention was dampened by Lagos, which put a stop to unfavorable press articles.

7. The reaction in Central Africa was severe. Zambia's statement denounced the "Russian imperialism in Czechoslovakia" as a "monstrous act of uncalled-for savagery." Congo (K) acted to withdraw all its students from Warsaw Pact countries. Burundi condemned the Soviet intervention, and students scheduled to study in the USSR were denied permission to leave the country.

8. Condemnation from the East African nations, though generally more restrained, was nevertheless widespread. Kenya called the Soviet intervention a "naked and brutal manifestation of the worst form of imperialism." Tanzania in unusually strong statements condemned the Soviet "aggression" as a direct violation of international law and of the UN charter. Uganda stated that respect had been lost for the USSR as a country assertedly opposing imperialism and championing freedom and democracy. Haile Selassie deplored the events in Eastern Europe as another example of a small country being overrun, and urged the withdrawal of Soviet forces as quickly as possible. Lesotho, in Southern Africa, condemned the "unjustified invasion" of Czechoslovakia by Soviet forces in "the strongest possible terms."

Middle East

9. Although the USSR has tried to elicit Arab support for the intervention by emphasizing Israeli assistance to the "far-reaching imperialist plans" for Czechoslovakia, most Arab countries have avoided making an official statement on the issue. Support for Moscow has come from Iraq, Syria, and Southern Yemen, all left-wing regimes dependent on, or hopeful of, military assistance from the USSR. Similarly, criticism has come mainly from those states considered pro-West: Jordan, Israel, and Libya. The UAR has taken an equivocal line, which is interesting in view of the large amounts of aid received from the Soviets. So have Morocco and Sudan, which are more recent beneficiaries of the USSR.

10. The UAR's most authoritative commentary to date makes little attempt to hide Cairo's distaste for the Soviet action. Hasanayn Heykal, editor of Cairo's major daily Al Ahram and a confidant of President Nasir, wrote on 30 August that the dangers to Czechoslovak Communism were "not sufficient to warrant military intervention." Because of "principle," he said, he chose not to approve the invasion, but because of "circumstance" he chose not to condemn it. Nevertheless, he concluded that "military intervention is wrong" and "what is wrong is wrong."

11. There have been other signs of the UAR's displeasure. Cairo's press spokesman, Al-Zayyat, has missed both weekly news conferences since the invasion and, according to US sources there, has privately repudiated the pro-Soviet line. Other press comment points to Egypt's long-standing friendship with Czechoslovakia, especially Prague's assistance in helping to break the Western arms monopoly in 1955. Newspapers have also carried Western press accounts of the event, which is not usual in Egypt, along with numerous pictures of the occupation.

12. There are many reasons why Cairo--and possibly other Arab states--might resent Moscow's occupation of Czechoslovakia. As of late, the Egyptians have appeared to be looking toward the US and the USSR to arrange a political settlement of the Middle East deadlock. Cairo surely views the occupation as a serious blow to those hopes. Now Egypt's only major ally--the USSR--is in de facto military occupation of another nation and Cairo can hardly support such an action while protesting the occupation of its own territory. By and large, however, the UAR is trying to lie low, and has issued no official statement thus far.

13. Of all the Middle Eastern states justifying the Soviet action, Iraq has been the most forthright, calling the invasion a "defense of world-wide freedom." The Soviet government has hitherto reserved judgment on the new Iraqi regime, implying that Moscow's approval is linked to Baghdad's future performance. Iraq may believe that supporting the intervention will increase its standing with the Kremlin.

Effects

14. The image the Soviet Union has sought to create for itself in Africa and Asia as an enemy of imperialism and champion of democracy has obviously been tarnished by recent events in Czechoslovakia. Several African governments have canceled cultural exchange programs with the USSR and previously existing suspicion in some governments of Soviet propaganda efforts has probably been increased. Nevertheless, there is unlikely to be much lasting or significant impact on Soviet relations with these countries. Many of them receive Soviet military and economic assistance, and some have strategic or internal political reasons for keeping their relations with Moscow on an even keel. In most of the others, Moscow had little prestige to lose.